Free

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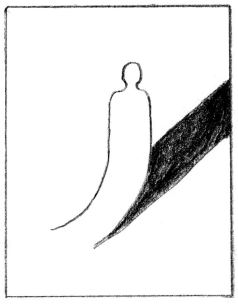
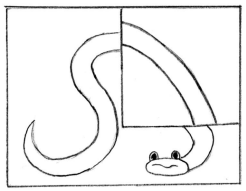




Hi and welcome to the new issue. You will notice some elements throughout this issue, Jonn Smith, a Chicago-based artist provided the illustrations, like the one above.

There are some authoritative architectural pieces that flow throughout the issue, like this sea life one you'll see over to your right. You've seen them before, especially if you use your pegs. It's interesting to think about the lengths people go to to hinder freedom but even more interesting to think of the ways that people can backlash against the ways we are kept down. ©

"Underground will live forever, baby: we just like roaches, never dyin', always livin'."

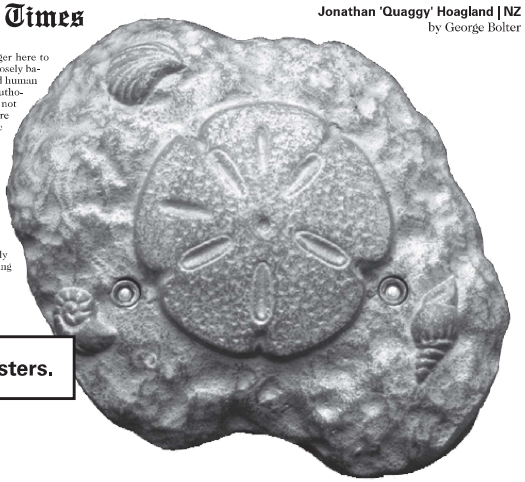
The Challenging Times

by Nick Ferreira

Springtime, coming in hot! Challenger here to cool down the pace baby. This whole issue is loosely based around the idea of "authority." BMXers and human beings in general, deal with the concept of authority on a daily basis but sometimes it might not always be apparent when authoritative forces are weighing down on us. That's kind of the same way we approached the issue; some of the articles are directly related to authority but some are just tangentially related—you can have fun deciphering how any of the articles are related to the theme. When you're done, let us know what you think--it's about time *Challenger* had a 'Letters to the Editor' section. We'll see you sometime in late June of 2019 with a full issue devoted to our trip to Japan!

I wrote a longer introduction but it ultimately came down to a slogan which sums up everything I said in four words:

No Gods, No Masters.



Jonathan 'Quaggy' Hoagland | NZ
by George Bolter

Jakob Sommer | Vienna
by Luka Veren

Yumi Tskuda | Long Beach
by Rich Hirsch

The Freestyle Experience
Entry 003

By Richard Mungall

Surrendering to authority is the most important thing you can possibly do in BMX and life. Wait what?

The concept of authority is very muddled in our culture and is often only understood in an externally imposed way. My previous *Challenger* article about subversion was addressing that kind of control-based outer authority embodied by police, teachers, CEOs and Pentagon directors. This is the toxic authority that seeks to force people into doing things against their will. A major purpose of my life is to help liberate people from this kind of authority so that they can tap into what many of us have discovered through freestyle: real human freedom.

But there is no ultimate freedom. In reality, we don't get to choose whether or not we follow an authority, but only which authority we follow. So I want to talk about a different kind of authority, the one that poets, artists, and mystics have discovered and talked about in different ways. This authority, too, demands surrender, but not in opposition to life; rather, in service to life. To state it simply, this is the authority that burns to get you off the couch and on your bike. This is the part of you that just knows what your life needs and will make you miserable until you finally listen to yourself. This is the authority of your inner knowing, your intuition, your wisdom. Your ability to tune into and then surrender to this authority is what determines whether your life will be happy or miserable.

In our culture we are conditioned through years of compulsory education to make decisions by "figuring it out" with our thinking minds. Most people alive today have lost contact with that deeper intuitive knowing, an essential and immaterial organ of the body that is the source of art and inspiration. The result is that most people feel totally lost. The gift of freestyle trains us to tune into this hidden part of ourselves. It's from here that we feel into which trick we want to do. It's that subtle sense that tells us to turn left instead of right as we explore the psycho-geographic contours of a new city. Through riding we align with our deeper sense of self that leads to the diversity of riding styles, whether the wild rough style of Butcher or the graceful flight of Ruben. It's all beautiful because it's real. It's exactly how they were meant to ride and we feel it. Through bike riding we come to know what this feels like internally, making this "freestyle authority" potentially available in all areas of life. When we listen to that part of ourselves, life is dope.

Because we don't have a culture that teaches us how to use this faculty I've created a simple tool. I call it the "fuck ya test." When you are confronted with a decision you may face many confusing and competing factors. This could be a small decision like what trick you want to do on a ledge, or a big decision like whether or not to dump a gazillion dollars into college. You imagine the possibility and see what happens. When it's a "fuck ya" response in your body you are onto something.

However, the concepts of outer and inner authority are a bit more complicated and worth exploring. We actually need outer authorities in the sense that others can become models of inspiration by demonstrating what is possible. The best approach I've found is to be constantly scanning the world for people that are living in a way that feels aligned with my own inner compass. "Fuck ya" means I've found something good. But discerning the difference between positive and negative influences is a difficult, nuanced, and ever deepening process.

On the negative side, we all face vast social forces that insist our self worth is based on money, image, or status. These can be internalized and then mistaken for our own. For instance, looking back on my life I can see the painful times where I've bought into these stories to some extent. Sadly I've also seen amazing people quit riding because they started believing it was some stupid thing kids do, replacing their passion with the suburban American Dream. But it seemed to bring them into bitterness rather than happiness and flow. That is the real test of authenticity.

On the positive side, my first real authority figures were a BMX crew four years older than me when I was 10. What they showed me felt so right deep in my bones. As I've watched my life unfold, every single time I've trusted that deep feeling my life has grown and flourished, while every time I haven't I've had some level of regret. Today, one of my most important authorities is my Zen teacher. He embodies something I hope to be like even a little bit some day. Through relationship with him over some years I've discovered that his authority is unbelievably trustworthy--what he tells me works, and the more I download how he is the world, the more my life feels right. This is real outer authority: testing it against my own inner authority to see if it fits. Ideally we follow things as long as they fit and move on when they don't.

Here's an analogy from street riding. You drop into a neighborhood and the landscape is given. The ledges, rails, and stairs are already in place. But you get to choose what to do with that landscape. This is what art really is: Here's some constraints, now what is your inspiration given those constraints? Authority is the same way. You are born into a world with infinite possibility. You can choose to follow any person or thing you want. Today it's common to talk about how overwhelming the choices are. But when you are tapped into your inner authority life becomes much clearer, freer, and happier because now you know who your boss is. It's your intuition and your heart. Virtually everything has already been tried, so all you have to do is look around and check out the results of any idea or activity to see how it might work out for you. The world is literally a palette and human freedom exists in choosing and acting on what gets you psyched.

This is about the messy process of evaluating whether or not we are really on track for the life we want in each moment. We have to tease apart the messages that are constantly bombarding us from our own inner direction. We will often make mistakes we only realize in retrospect but fortunately, this is the essential process of becoming who we really are. We learn what's good in part by experiencing what's not. If we aren't constantly messing up and correcting course our lives have become stagnant.

So here's my take on authority: Healthy authority is surrendering to anything that keeps us on track for the life we were meant to live. Personally I need practices to keep me tethered to my truth such as riding, meditation, travel, reading, writing, and other things. What helps bring you back to yourself? What pulls you off track? Which friends or mentors will call you on your shit before you make a stupid mistake? Do not underestimate the importance of the fact that you cannot stay true to yourself alone. This is the myth of individualism. I speak from so many past mistakes when I say that without those supports I lose contact with my source. Things get muddled and confusing and it leads to more suffering than I wanted.

Surrounding ourselves with the right authorities is the art of living. Surrendering to the right authorities is the secret to freedom. Freestyle taught me what this feels like so I can spend the rest of my life trying to bring this into everything I do.

I'll have a new series soon on ImprimaturBMX.com, keep your eye out if that interests you. If you have anything you want me to explore there or in a future Challenger *issue, send comments or questions to @doinitforthestreets.*

Learn How To Have Fun: Take An Extra Crank

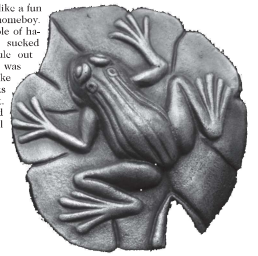
"Mask off, I took it mask off"

By Andrew Burton

"That's obvious,' you say? Totally. I hear ya. Here's the thing though: Y'all ain't doing it. Sooo maybe it's not. Maybe you just thought you were having fun when you really weren't. Maybe your entire no-fun having life is a lie, my boy.

Matter fact, hang on, lemme get'chu a cool glass of agua. You are gonna need it to choke back this massive red fun pill. Ok you ready? Here goes: Next time you get on your bike, take an extra crank for Christ's sake. Maybe two. You know, if you're feeling frisky that is. At least one. An extra crank is faster and faster is funner. That's just facts, b.

Did you really think you could have fun with that half-crank? Yeah, I saw the half-crank. You think I didn't when I did? I saw it and it wasn't fun. At all. It was like a fun sucking vortex, homeboy. An awful black hole of half-crankery that sucked every fun molecule out of the galaxy that was your too-slow bike stunt. Half cranks DO NOT count. That's reality and yes you can call me Fishburne.



Shadow

SUBROSA SUB ROSA

Florida

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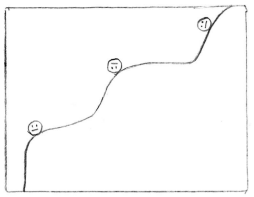

Grinding Cars:
Jared Souney On His Photo Of Ralph Sinisi

Interview by Nick Ferreira Photo by Jared Souney

There's so much going on in this photo beyond the trick. Can you set the scene for the readers like where it was shot and what time of the night it was shot and anything else that you might remember from that night over 20 years ago?
I went into that trip with a plan to have a couple of days to shoot with Ralph before we all drove out to a 2-flip Contest in Long Island. For whatever reason the flights from California got cancelled the first day, so by the time I actually got there we had one night to shoot before leaving in the morning for the contest. Interviews were different back then (at least the way we were doing them). More recently people started to shoot for months, sometimes longer, and assemble a montage of holy grail tricks that you'll probably never see them try again. We approached it very differently back then. It wasn't so much a "this is your one chance at an interview, so you better make it perfect." It was more "here's what this guy is doing at the time." They were more like a day (or couple of days) in the life features… something that readers could aspire to, and get a feel for who they were at that moment in time, versus three years of bangers packaged together. There's nothing wrong with the glory-feature style. We just did it much more in the moment. That made for a packed night in situations like this though, and we just went out cruising the city hoping for the best. But that whole interview was shot over the course of five or six hours cruising the city with Ralph and his crew.

The car photo in particular was shot late at night — probably after midnight — and very much in a "dark alley" kind of scenario, right by the iconic Brooklyn Banks (which was mostly closed off at the time). Street riding in NYC can get a little wild. Over the years when I've been there for contests or on road trips, some of the locals and out of town hooligans would be riding over moving taxi's, wall riding buses… I think I hoped we'd at least get some of that urban-chaos element, but I also wouldn't pressure someone to do something like that. It just kind of happened that Ralph was like "I want to grind a car."

We happened upon that spot by the banks where there were a bunch of City / Public Works type vehicles parked along the road — there must have been some sort of city work offices nearby, or they just used that area for parking, because all the cars down along there were some sort of NYC city work vehicles. It just seemed like the right place to do it: A street with a bunch of old, city vehicles, some of which happened to have squared off trunks. We were pretty hidden down there in the dark, but regardless it was very hit and run. He did it once or twice at most, and then we bolted to the next spot. I don't want to knock a mid 80s Chrysler (that was my first car) but he definitely did not go for the nicest car on the block, and I think we felt okay knowing it wasn't some random old lady's car. It also was more my job to document what was happening, and less to talk him out of it. So we went for it. There wasn't any crazy photo set up. Nothing in that interview was. It was just a flash on the side of the camera and then someone was holding a small remote flash for me, just off to the side to fill it in a bit, helping to compensate for the fact that it was so dark down there. Most of the stuff in that interview was "get it and go," which honestly is the most fun way to shoot, at least to me.

I definitely remember reading a response in the letters section of *Ride* and someone seemed to be upset because Ralph was grinding a car. I think they mentioned him being a gear head himself. I was just looking at your repost of the photo on Instagram and even now someone mentioned it was a "dickish move." Where do you stand on this? Did you have any thoughts about not running it?
We did get a few letters, but I'm sure we knew it would, and I'm sure we talked about it. This wasn't the first time something pissed someone off… it's sort of inevitable, but I'm sure we knew it would get a reaction. But it did create conversation. My only real personal justification at the time was that it was a 15-year-old, city-owned work car, that had it's share of scrapes and dings. A car that sits parallel parked in any city, especially NY, is taking a bit of a battering. Does that make it okay? Probably not. Documenting something can be conflicting. You could look at any of those photos in that interview the same way. The wall-ride on the opening spread is on a roll-up door on the side of a restaurant in Chinatown. That's someone's business, and had we done any damage, it would have fallen on their wallet to fix it. I look at street riding very differently now than I did 20 years ago. I own the small building I use for my studio, so I've come to appreciate that I'm responsible for any sort of damage. If someone tags the wall out front, or leaves a pile of trash, I have to fix it. If someone knocked over a handrail (I don't have one), or broke a window, I'd have to pay for that. I guess that makes me look at all this stuff a bit differently, and it's certainly changed what I will and will not shoot. Roof stuff is off limits to me these days for sure… all I see is roof leaks. But going back to that time and place, and the car itself, I would still shoot that photo of Ralph, given the circumstances.

Interesting. I mean street riding in general is always trespassing or destruction of property so I do think it's a slippery slope to say one thing is more destruction than the other. But with that said, I don't really know where I stand on it because I think you can pretty easily find yourself in a trap; if I'm not okay with grinding someone's car, how can I be okay with wallriding someone's wall, which, I am very okay with cause that shit is fun.
I think what I would shoot a photo of and what I'd personally be comfortable riding might be different. I probably wouldn't ever grind a car on the street. Maybe at 2-Hip Meet the Street. I've certainly ridden my fair share of concrete walls, and ground plenty of ledges. I think it's very much a to each their own situation, as far as where the line is. I've said "no" to shooting stuff that involved people's houses… stuff like wall rides on the side of homes that had banks up to them. That's just not for me. If a concrete wall on the side of an overpass gets some tire marks on it, that's possibly a nuisance, but it's not the end of the world. I guess for me it comes down to my own interpretation at the time. I've certainly put my share of quickcrete at the bottom of barriers and that sort of thing. I guess maybe these days I distinguish more than I used to between causing something to need drastic repairs, and making it a little more usable.

This was shot for *Ride BMX* US at about the same time New Jersey just seemed to explode with coverage: Props Scene Report, riders getting sponsored, etc. What were the conversations like when it came to what you were going to cover? I mean since things were slower getting to the readers/consumers of media in those days, how were you all tuned into what was going on across the country?
I was from the Northeast and had only lived on the west coast for about a year, so I was tuned into that scene a bit. A lot of the Jersey guys would come up to New England and ride with us over the years, and vice versa. So the guys I hadn't met, I'd heard about just through proximity. The Jersey scene went way back to the 80s, but the new, more street oriented guys like Ralph and his crew (Tiseo, George Dossantos, Will Taubin, Jeff Zielinski, Rob Dolecki, etc.) were becoming more and more known outside of the mid-Atlantic right about the same time I started working at *Ride*. Jeff Z and Dolecki were starting to shoot a lot of photos of all those guys and sending them to us here and there. Ralph had just had a full part in *Nowhere Fast*, so that put him on another level as soon as that came out. For us at the magazine, we just had to talk to people and keep our ears open. This was the message board era, but internet video was pretty shit. We'd get a lot of local videos sent to us, and we watched as much of that stuff as we could. The message board sites like Protyle, and later BMXBoard, contributed pretty heavily to the information sharing. And then we just had good old fashioned phones on our desk, and that new fangled email. I certainly pushed for as much as I could from the east coast in general, but either way, no one could have ignored those guys.

The magazine's editorial staff at the time was just myself and (Mark) Losey. We didn't have big budgets, so every trip we took was about trying to make as much different content as we could, hopefully to be spread across a couple issues. Ralph's part in *Nowhere Fast* was fresh on people's minds, so he was an obvious choice to try to shoot with, and the 2-Hip contest in NY helped connect all the dots in getting me out there. I could fly to Newark, shoot with Ralph, and then catch a ride to Long Island with those guys for the contest. From there, I hopped in with someone else after the contest to get more photos somewhere else. On trips like this one I'd usually I'd make new connections, see new riders, and hear about who was popping up in those areas. I'm pretty antisocial and hate networking, but there's something about the BMX scene at that time that broke down those social barriers.

I've always really enjoyed your black and white photos that were featured in *Ride* but what was or is your favorite set-up to shoot BMX photos?
That photo certainly falls into the style I like to shoot most. It's not necessarily the black and white aspect, it's the raw-moment vibe that motion and on camera flash creates. There's motion blur in a lot of that stuff. It's not perfect by any means, and those imperfections are the reality of what we were doing—it was seat of the pants. It's hard to explain to people that haven't been around this stuff, but this photo is a lot of what photography is to me. I kind of despise the big production, agency style, commercial photoshoots where you have producers, art directors, stylists, assistants, catering, permits, budgets, massive lighting kits, etc. I've done that stuff, and sometimes still do, but I usually end up hating it. The stuff we were shooting back then was often much less polished than a lot of the stuff today. 70% of that for me, is that I had no clue what the fuck I was doing, and I was learning on the fly. But even now that I have a bit more grasp on what I'm doing, I still prefer to shoot that same "hit and run," handheld flash, sort of way. A lot of action photos today are tack sharp, perfectly composed, with all the action stopped perfectly using multiple strobes around the scene and the higher flash sync speeds that digital allows. It can feel very fairy-tale. The photos I grew up on and was inspired by… most of those photos would go in the garbage today. The imperfect crops, motion blur, flashes in the photo… the imperfections are what makes those old photos feel so right. As the years passed I shot a lot of more "polished" stuff for a while, but I've found myself reverting back to that raw, handheld flash, fisheye style a lot more over the last 5 or 6 years again. Riding around with friends in a sketchy hit and run situation, and coming out of there with a photo when you had no time to set up, all the while knowing you might have to run for your life or for the police… it's fun. In those old film days, there was a bit of added anxiety and adrenaline in the "did I get it or not waiting period" before you processed the film too.

That photo in particular was black and white for a couple reasons: It was so dark down there, that black and white was the best option. It was a bit more forgiving of a film in that kind of lighting. The slide films we shot were super slow in speed (usually ISO 64), primarily because those films are much sharper and had better contrast than faster films, which could be super grainy and flat. I ended up using (Kodak) TMAX 400 black and white a lot because it's a great film to begin with, but it was a faster alternative that still had a decent grain if you blew it up to larger size. Also, contrasty black and white film feels very "New York City at night" to me; like the street photography you'd see from the Studio 54 era. Contrasty, flash lit, wide angle shots with a lot of movement. Again, it's a gritty look, and for New York City, it just feels right to me to have some of that.

For sure. Yeah, I guess I just really remember this one article you did about street riding super early that was all shot in B&W with no flash so maybe that's why I associate the B&W with this more loose style. I think a lot of photos lately seem way too polished for my taste. I feel like BMX is such a raw energy that when it becomes clinical it just loses the energy. And I also think that the approach you took to the shooting of this photo and the other photos in the article over the course of a night instead of weeks, really shows that energy. Okay last question: This might be a hard one but but what do you think your favorite BMX photo of all time is?
The photo that always comes to mind, and it is a black and white shot, is Mat Hoffman's *Go* Magazine cover that Spike Jonze shot of the first ever (at least in public) flip fakie, back in 1990. Photographically it is pretty utilitarian, but it's a moment in time that hit hard on so many levels. Information traveled so much slower in those days. So when that magazine showed up in mailboxes, most of us around the world had no idea it was coming, or that it had even happened just two or three months prior. It was a serious "oh shit" moment, that I don't think has happened like that to me since. I don't think it's impossible, but I think it's much more difficult to create that level of "holy shit" these days. Everything is so fleeting now. And every new thing always hit the rumor mill before it gets released. It's just a different time.

There's nothing on the technical photo side, or composition wise that makes that image stand alone, but it took one moment in time and made it forever for anyone who got that magazine. There aren't a lot of those kind of moments. I can't remember the last time I stood at my mailbox in disbelief for that long. These days if that were to happen I would expect that it would be some sort of unexpected giant bill or something.

Overall I tend to appreciate a documentary style of photography more than a commercial style. Most of my influences visually are probably more design related. Magazine making in general was influential to me growing up…I wanted to be a part of and learn that whole process, which is what got me into photography. I was a designer before I got into taking photos, and I tend to shoot photos with design in mind. The 80s skate and BMX photography is what got me started and what still gets me excited.

"A lot of action photos today are tack sharp, perfectly composed, with all the action stopped perfectly using multiple strobes around the scene and the higher flash sync speeds that digital allows. It can feel very fairy-tale."

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Previous Spread
Daniel Juritsch | Vienna
by Luka Veren

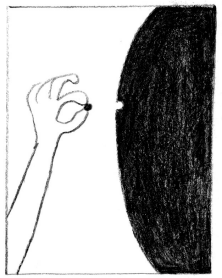
Made In Taiwan?

by Kris Kim

For the longest time any BMX part not made in the US was directly associated with being "Made in Taiwan." S&M made ads targeting companies that did so; ads that would certainly not fly in today's politically correct culture. Primo, owning up to its place of manufacturing, released their video *Made in Taiwan* in 1999. There is a whole chapter in Mat Hoffman's autobiography, *The Ride of my Life*, that deals with Hoffman Bikes moving their manufacturing to Taiwan. This Taiwanese move is absolutely a pivotal moment in BMX history.

Prior to the early 90s, producing BMX parts and frames in the US was a viable option. American manufacturing was still very much alive then and more importantly still affordable but during the 90s there was a shift, not only in BMX but in the country's greater manufacturing economy. Work was being exported to developing nations who could promise heavy savings and it became more affordable to manufacture goods halfway across the world and ship it than it would be to make it in the US. This difference is largely due to developing nations having drastically lower costs of living and manufacturing. It's the idea where making $70,000 in downtown Manhattan is different from making $70,000 in rural Idaho. Add the fact that these new host governments provided more leniency to companies on issues like environmental effects and work safety standards. Every extra step or obstacle it took for a good to become a product, things like EPA standards and labor union fees was another increment added to the total cost. The manufacturers goal is to maximize profit. Adding these extra costs that were becoming more prevalent in the 90s was going to make the products less affordable to the American consumer. The only choice a lot of these companies had was to move manufacturing overseas. Mat Hoffman discusses in his biography that his motivation was to make BMX more accessible and pass the savings onto consumers. He felt that Taiwan's quality was good enough to make that transition. Prior to that Hoffman Bikes were made in Oklahoma, Hoffman's birthplace. Years later other rider-owned companies followed suit and soon Taiwan became a hotbed for BMX manufacturing.

To understand why all this happened is to understand the history of Taiwan and its place in global politics itself. Modern day Taiwan is very much a new country. It's really began in 1949 when capitalist forces led by Chiang Kai-Shek lost mainland China to forces under the leadership of Communist China's first leader, Mao Zedong. Taiwan is an island off the coast of the mainland and that's where the nationalist/capitalist retreated and made home base. Even now each country claims to be the true Chinese government. The United States for the longest time did not recognize mainland Communist China as a country due to Cold War tensions. The act of not recognizing the country closed off any type of economic relationship between the US and mainland China. A lot of these international economic relationships were relegated to neighboring countries who shared similar capitalist philosophies like Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, and Japan. This was largely beneficial to the US. The idea was that for the United States and the Western World to be safe from the growing Communist threat in the East led by the Soviet Union and Communist China, ally countries of the East would have to develop enough to act as a political buffer and be able to contain communism from growing. The United States provided stimulus money to help build up manufacturing and began economic relations to these ally countries for them to enter the modern industrial world at a more rapid rate. It's important to note that most of Asia was still very largely an agrarian society that had little to no manufacturing ability. A lot of the metal based industry of Taiwan was an extended product of these policies. Manufacturing can be moved to Taiwan to grow the Taiwanese government and people while their lower cost of living allowed for US companies to maximize profits.



The US maintained very little relations with mainland China until 1972 when President Nixon made his infamous visit to open up trade. Nixon's reasoning was that if the US can ally itself in the very least way of economically with China, that would provide further strain to the the larger enemy of the Soviet Union: the enemy of my enemy is my friend. The Soviet Union and China, even though they shared similar ideologies, simply did not get along. At some point there was border conflict between them. By maintaining this economic relationship with China, the US can sway this country of billions onto their side of the Cold War. China benefits by having outside money to help develop their own infrastructure just as other ally countries have. China didn't have money and it takes money to make money as the old saying goes. At a rapid rate, China itself industrialized. When you're government controls everything, whatever the government wills tends to happen a lot quicker.

America relegated more and more manufacturing to China. At first it was very basic stuff, China did not have the education level in the population for advanced manufacturing that the US had. Part of the deal that the US made with China is that the US would allow a large population of Chinese students to study in American universities and the idea is that they would bring that knowledge back to China and regrow an educated population. The Communist party of China has previously purged their intelligentsia population during the Cultural Revolution where an estimated of three million citizens were executed. After a few decades go by, the manufacturing economy in China grows to an estimated 44% of their GDP by 2004. It becomes the chief source of income for the country.

As a state run economy can control wages and the population much easier than their neighboring free market economies that the US initially relied on. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have developed into first world countries so higher standards of living are naturally coinciding. As wages increase and their population demands more, it becomes less profitable for US manufacturing. China's state run economy circumnavigates this problem largely by concentrating the majority of wealth into a few major cities like Hong Kong and Shanghai. The majority of the population still live with a low standard of living that the Chinese government purposely hides. By allowing this purposeful division of the population, the Chinese government hopes to benefit from both the advantages of a free market economy and a state-run economy. Greater wealth and freedoms allow for a society to progress but at the expense of social instability that comes with progress. Educated people are harder to control than an uneducated population. China treads this line very carefully.

So why is all this all relevant? BMX as an industry is caught in a pickle. BMX doesn't have enough money to make American manufacturing economically viable and now it seems like Taiwanese manufacturing is losing its original prestige. Even if a US factory agrees to make parts, there is a good chance that those prices would be marked up into an unacceptable range that is needed for BMX consumers. BMX as a hobby for young adults and kids has to remain cheap for it to be viable. The problem is that there isn't enough American manufacturing left and even a smaller pool who will even cater to the niche that BMX is. Taiwan's prices are probably increasing steadily as they become more of a modern industrial country. If you look at the other ally countries like South Korea and Japan who have developed quicker than Taiwan, they have largely transitioned out of being low cost manufacturing and converted their economies into more specialized tech based ones. Samsung, a popular South Korean company famous today for TV's, smartphones, and robotics originally made it's start selling dried fish seasoning. The general growth of the original ally countries, while greatly beneficial in the grand scheme of things, is not giving BMX an easy choice.

The reason for this silent transition is because the stigma associated with Chinese manufacturing. Some of its nearly completely unregulated quality control—sometimes even leading to deaths—issues have always plagued the country. It's gotten better as of late but the prior generations definitely took notice of this and now China is heavily associated with cheap and unreliable products. Department store bicycles that adopted Chinese factories the quickest have notoriously bad quality control, well known by any serious BMX rider. For the core BMX industry to advertise that their factories have moved to China would be a certain marketing suicide. Remember that this country's history of industry is less than 50 years old and to transition into a completely new way of doing things does not come easy. Chinese manufacturing today is a lot better and more varied. What was once a country that only had cheap manufacturing now finds itself at every level from that still former cheap manufacturing to even dabbling with high tech. It's an unfair assessment to group all Chinese manufacturing today as being what it was decades ago. However, the stigma certainly does persist. I read a thread where someone mentioned that a legitimate BMX brand's completes were made in China, not Taiwan. I'm not sure if their higher quality aftermarket parts are also. I've seen some circumstantial evidence that I feel supports my case that BMX companies will eventually move from Taiwan to China for manufacturing, just as they moved from US to Taiwan in order to cut costs. It took time to destigmatize Taiwanese manufacturing and it might take time to destigmatize Chinese as well. However, companies outside of BMX, such as Apple, manufacture their products in China. BMX is not exempt from the trends and patterns of the modern world.

Paul Smith | Colorado
by Damian Racut

Ross Albreski | Colorado
by Joshua Lucero

Rethinking Security

by Ross Albreski

Something which has been enigmatic to me in BMX is the level of seriousness in terms of shit-talk while riding with your friends. In the years I've ridden there has been many iterations of what was "cool or uncool." Whether it has been, "Your pants are too tight" to "You don't run steel pegs," we are always seemingly busting chops in the name of fun. The enigma for me is that sometimes, especially in regard to those who aren't riders, our fun can be misconstrued as grown men acting like assholes. This has confused me because those who tend to act in this manner, whether it be mocking a security guard because of their presumed earnings or arguing with a homeowner who doesn't want someone fucking with their property, always seem to be the people who express how "core" they are or how much they love BMX. Yet, I have not been able to figure out in my twenty or so years of riding how those who "love" BMX can also be those who put it in a bad light. Oftentimes, in defense of this love for BMX, we find ourselves directly handing over reasons for outsiders to view us, and BMX, with disdain. The way I see it, perpetuating this tension with non-riders provides no justice or benefit to BMX in the long-term.

I am writing this because I have been the person I am writing about in the past and I feel that I've personally done nothing but misrepresent how amazing this culture is by doing so. This is because when acting in the manner above, it comes off as entitled and as if I am more deserving than anyone else. And because of my "deservingness," I am going to do this trick. What other than a place of entitlement, does the idea that I as a rider, have the right to argue with anyone; especially when it isn't your place to argue? This type of behavior is shameful and embarrassing, especially when viewed from the outside; it looks like a bunch of adults throwing a tantrum over a toy. So where does this behavior come from? Is it because we resort to our tribal instincts when in our respective cliques? Or do riders who tend to act in this manner simply get off on belittling another human being due to their own insecurities? All I know is that, after much reflection and some time away from my bike, I don't want to act like this. Because this is what I love and I want it to be seen in its best light, far from the dirtbag stereotype the public may have of it. Hopefully by showing the "real world" how amazing BMX actually is and not that we are just disrespectful punks creeping in your alley, acting up. We aren't above anything and maybe by approaching interactions with "fun opposers," which can escalate quickly, with a little bit of respect, we can only benefit BMX. Maybe we can even give you and the next kid that comes around an opportunity to ride that unrideable spot.

Curvature Counsel: The Angle Of Repose

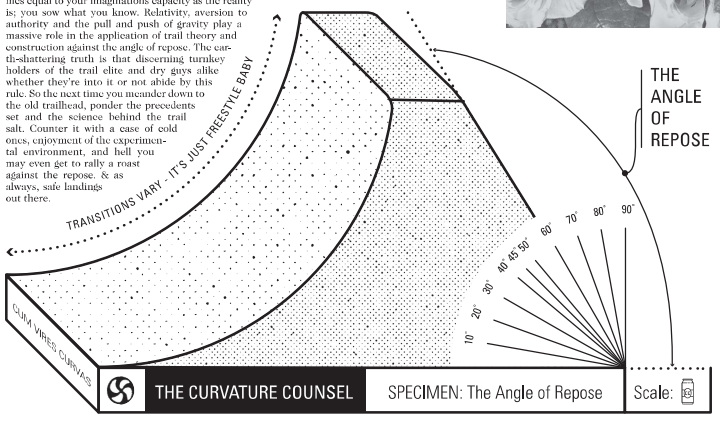
Text and illustration by Chester Jones

If you've ever dared to pack in a lip or clack in a landing you've unknowingly built against the angle of repose, it's the angle that the dirt naturally forms relative to the horizontal plane you're most definitely in the middle of. The angle lies at the undying authority of the almighty gravity.

The repose ranges from 0 degrees to 90 degrees and involuntary shifts into shape depending on how chronic your dirt is. The morphology of the material you're digging with affects the intended angle; smoother round grains of flarf or topsoil can't necessarily be stacked as steeply as rougher interlocking flakes of say PA or WA clay. Although, this hinges entirely on your stacking strategy and The CC recommends a stack/step/stack formation that the Egyptians pioneered back in the day.

It's in the medium that the matters begin to metamorphasize. Applying solvents to your selection of dirt as simple as water bridges gaps as big as the mind can wander. The electrostatic attraction between the water and dirt multiplied by your flathead smashing against its face may create the castles of curvatures your creativity intends. Because that's the thing with the angle of repose; if you were to tip any type of trail mix out of your wheelbarrel the mix only stacks itself so steep. (duh) You gotta stack that shit to mack that shit.

The repose reaps in the foundations of any trail feature, inherent to every backside, side slope, and frontside riding surface. The features radius, height, and width vary in volumes equal to your imaginations capacity as the reality is; you sow what you know. Relativity, aversion to authority and the pull and push of gravity play a massive role in the application of trail theory and construction against the angle of repose. The earth-shattering truth is that discerning turnkey holders of the trail elite and dry guys alike whether they're into it or not abide by this rule. So the next time you meander down to the old trailhead, ponder the precedents set and the science behind the trail salt. Counter it with a case of cold ones, enjoyment of the experimental environment, and hell you may even get to rally a roast against the repose. & as always, safe landings out there.



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The Structuration Of Bmx

Roy Christopher

In 1994, then editor-in-chief of *Thrasher*, Jake Phelps, declared skateboarding dead. He even put a tombstone on the cover of the magazine. "Future generations will never even start," he wrote, "because all they see is someone down at the local spot trying to varial heelflip nosceslide nollieflip fakie…" Of course, skateboarding has gotten much crazier since, much more technical, much more gnarly. Phelps' words remain relevant: "How could anyone even comprehend it, much less want to do it?"

When freestyle BMX started, there were only a handful of tricks to learn, and it was easy to see where to start if you wanted to learn even the hardest of them. Curb endos, 180s, rollbacks, the core of the sport's repertoire didn't even require special equipment or frame geometry. This changed quickly as the sport progressed. By the late 1980s, there were hundreds of tricks, many of which involved rolling around in either direction on either wheel. Back when there weren't many tricks, not only could one see how one might do them, but one could also appreciate their difficulty. Once that level rises too high for new participants, the population involved diminishes.

It could be argued that one of the core differences between skateboarding and BMX is that the latter lacks a culture of its own. This might seem like a minor problem, one easily overcome by events, personality, camaraderie, or marketing. But when your sport threatens to disappear and die once a decade, culture can be the one resource it needs to survive.

Culture is a tricky concept to define and understand. People have been trying for hundreds of years. I'm not going to try to figure it all out here, but there is a theory I think is relevant.

AMERICA

1992

The field of sociology has been pretty adept at studying how societies work and how individuals interact. It has been less successful at bridging the two. Sociologists are not alone in this gap. Einstein's two major theories, the theory of general relativity and his version of quantum theory, don't work well together either. It's a problem of things making since at the macro scale and things making sense at the micro scale but the two contradicting each other somewhere in between. It's a problem of the bottom-up and the top-down not quite meeting in the middle. Sociology has the same problem.

BMX IS DEAD

British sociologist Anthony Giddens set out to fix this with his theory of structuration. Structuration is the idea that a system's parts amount to a whole system, that the trees and their attendant processes add up to a functioning forest. Giddens aimed to apply this idea to sociology thereby bridging the micro- (individuals or "agents") and the macro- (society or "structure") scales of his field. Structuration theory states that the actions of individuals culminate into social practices (from the bottom-up) and societal authority enforces rules and mores (from the top-down). The two form a feedback loop in the middle. For example, if someone breaks a rule, they might be reprimanded. If everyone breaks a rule, the rule gets adjusted. Through this ongoing process, society is constituted, a culture emerges. Culture is the glues that holds all the pieces together.

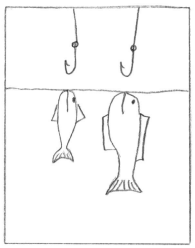
Unlike skateboarding, BMX lacks any semblance of top-down structure. In the early 1990s, the old guard of the Master Cluster (Andy Jenkins, Mark Lewman, and Spike Jonze) gave way to Brad McDonald and later, Mark Losey. Many of the members of the late-1980s Haro team all started their own companies (Mat Hoffman, Rick Moliterno, Ron Wilkerson). With the more recent shake-ups in BMX and BMX media, who's in charge now? BMX, like every other thing, has splintered into a million apps and channels. The technological infrastructure of the media and the market has shifted from a monolithic shelf to microscopic shards, from macro- to micro-niches.

The paragraph above is an absurdly abbreviated and oversimplified history of a major historical epoch in our sport and its media, but without a top-down, the bottom-up has to add up to something.

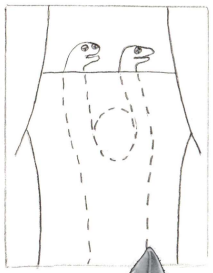
Postscript: I wrote for Thrasher's kid-brother magazine, SLAP, *for almost its entire print-run (1992-2008), and I worked in the High Speed offices in 1998. Phelps had no reason to remember me when I ran into him years later, but he did, and he had a smart-ass comment for me like he did for anyone else. We don't have a Jake Phelps, and sadly neither does skateboarding anymore. Rest in peace.*

Sequence of Events

words and photos by Sam Waller



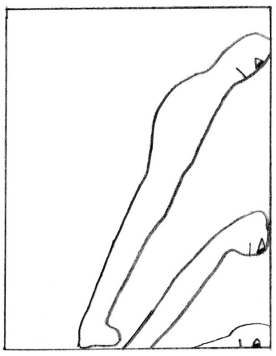
Trey Jones | Florida
by JP Flanders



Loz Taylor 180ing over a Liverpudlian pavement-chasm for the approval of an abnormally enthusiastic security guard. It's important to remember that not everyone who makes their living patrolling schools, shopping centres and scenic seating areas is a humourless bore (but most of them are).

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

- You have the right to remain silent. However, cops may try to make you believe that if you snitch on yourself, it will make things easier for you.
- Do not consent to search. If you are in a vehicle and are being threatened, cops must obtain a warrant before searching your car.
- You may ask if you are being detained. If the answer is yes, then you may calmly leave. Keep in mind that sometimes cops will refuse to answer if you are being detained.
- You may film police. By rule of the First Amendment this is always legal, but there are some technicalities that persist, like surreptitious filming. It remains unclear whether or not they have a constitutional right to demand to view videos or pictures on your device or camera on the spot without a warrant.
- Remember that cops will often do as they please. If you have a shitty police encounter, you may file a complaint with the local precinct. Remember to get names and badge numbers!
- For further information please see the ACLU "Know Your Rights" website. It can be accessed at: https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights



Carlos Cavet | Paraná, Brazil
by Thiago Rocha

Challenger BMX Magazine is made possible by the generous support from its subscribers and the sponsors whose logos you have seen throughout the issue. You have a lot of decisions when it comes time to buy things for your bike—the shops and companies that support Challenger wouldn't be a bad start. Buuuuutt it's also nice to just recognize—to see—that people are willing to support something for reasons other than monetary gain. To everyone that does that, thank you!

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#Hogshitrides Makin' Moves on a Tuesday Night Bay Area, Northern California Ride with us
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***

"STOP GETTING HURT"
-@pedalgrinds

***

Missed Connection Me: 43 y/o white guy, 5'7" (on a good day) You: Short, yellow frame with an extra downtube. I think your name was Asian. Last seen in Fall River, MA

***

Famed conspiracy theorist, Bobby Lazer (60), disappeared from his home Friday evening. If you have seen this man or have information about his whereabouts please call the local authorities immediately.

***

Dear Doomed Brand,
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Hit us up if you got something to say:

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Compiled By Jack Bee

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(BUT IF SHIT REALLY HITS THE FAN, GET A LAWYER)

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